

relating to the lobster and the oyster fishery. It seems to me to be rather an unusual procedure. If the committee is to do any service, the whole report should be referred to the committee, in order that the members of the committee could take into consideration what inquiries they might desire to make or in what way they could be of assistance to the minister and the department. I would regard it as singularly inexpedient to require a motion every two or three days in this House that some portion of the report be picked out and referred to the committee. The committee was appointed for the purpose of dealing generally with the subject of the fisheries, and I would be inclined to think that the whole report of the department ought to be referred to it. I do not know how it is with the Committee on Agriculture. Is the report of the Minister of Agriculture referred to that committee?

Mr. BRODEUR. I do not think so.

Mr. R. L. BORDEN. The position is this: When a committee is constituted, that committee can only deal with matters referred to it by the House. In the case of the Public Accounts Committee there is a reference to it of the public accounts for the year; that is the basis of its jurisdiction. In the case of the Committee on Agriculture, I understood that there was a reference of the report of the Minister of Agriculture, and that that was the basis of its jurisdiction; if it is not, I do not see where it finds any basis at all. It cannot deal with matters that are not referred to it by the House. And so the Committee on Fisheries is but a name; it has no power whatever until something has been referred to it with respect to which it can take action. I would suggest to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Marine and Fisheries that the whole report of the department had better be referred to the committee. It seems to me that there should be consideration also as to whether all reports of any department relative to the mines and minerals, waterways and water-powers, should not be referred to the committees dealing with those subjects, in order that they may have some basis on which they can commence their work.

Mr. BRODEUR. I may say that the reason why this particular part of the report has been referred to the committee is that the other day there was a meeting of the committee, at which the consensus of opinion was that we should inquire into the subject of lobsters and oysters; and in order that the committee might have some jurisdiction over the matter, it was decided to refer to the committee that part of the report. With regard to the Committee on Agriculture, I fully agree with

the hon. leader of the opposition that the proceedings of that committee must have been more or less irregular, because the committees of the House have no power to deal with anything that has not been referred to them by the House. I think that point was dealt with by the Prime Minister when the motion of my hon. friend, the leader of the opposition, was discussed, and I think that principle is embodied in the resolution which is passed immediately after the committees are formed at the opening of the session.

Mr. SPROULE. I think the hon. minister is astray, except in the case of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. BRODEUR. In the case of the Public Accounts Committee the report of the Auditor General is referred, and that is the matter for investigation by the committee. In the case of the Department of Agriculture, I do not know exactly what has been the practice in the past, but I am under the impression, having looked into the question when it was discussed some time ago, that no formal reference has been made to that committee. However, the practice of that committee for perhaps twenty years has been to take evidence from officers of the Department of Agriculture on the administration of the department. We have a Committee on Railways and Canals, but the report of the Department of Railways and Canals has never been referred to that committee.

Mr. FOSTER. The House is constantly referring matters to the committees.

Mr. BRODEUR. We refer Bills to them.

Mr. FOSTER. Not to the Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. BRODEUR. No, I think no Bill has been referred to the Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. FOSTER. That is what puzzles me in the discussion. The Committee on Agriculture is at work. But what is its basis? Can it take up an astronomical question and pursue that? Is the basis to be found in resolutions, or in daily or occasional references from this House?

Mr. BRODEUR. I think that most of the procedure of the Committee of Agriculture is entirely irregular, because it is not upon any reference from this House. The House has never referred the report of the Department of Railways to Committee on Railways, nor has it referred the report of the Department of Finance to the Committee on Banking and Commerce.

Mr. FOSTER. Then, why make the reference in this case?

Mr. BRODEUR. We desire to have these matters taken up by the Committee on Ma-